CORNELL EXTENSION BULLETIN 907

Some METHODS and TOOLS to Increase

INTEREST PARTICIPATION and TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

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First printing, June 1954

Some Methods and Tools to Increase Interest, Participation, and Teaching Effectiveness

William W. Reeder

All teachers and group leaders are anxious to stimulate interest and participation and to increase the effectiveness of their teaching. The real question is: "How to do it?"

A teacher is a creator of learning situations. The learner acquires for himself as he participates in the situation, and only that which he acquires has been taught. The attempt to teach does not constitute teaching. Different things have to be taught in different ways. The kind of learning experience that develops a skill may not develop knowledge and understanding. Additional factors have to be taken into account in the development of attitudes. The effective teacher or leader not only needs to know what he is trying to teach but should know the kind of learning experiences that are most likely to produce the desired result. Knowing, however, is not enough; he must be able to create the appropriate situations at the appropriate time. This means that *the effective teacher or group leader must not only have at his command a variety of tools and methods of teaching but must know where to use them, when to use them, and how to use them.*

The following information presents some of the tools and methods which, when properly used, help to increase interest, participation, and teaching effectiveness.

A distinction is made here between a tool and a method. A single identifiable technique is referred to as a *tool.* For example: a lecture would be one tool, a socio-drama would be another tool, and a panel would be another tool. In teaching a particular class or group period, a person may use only one of these tools to achieve his objective but it is more likely that he will use a combination of tools, such as a lecture plus small-group discussion, or a brief lecture followed by a socio-drama followed by a discussion. These combinations of tools that are used to achieve the objective of the meeting are referred to as *methods* in this publication.

The tools and methods presented in this bulletin have many uses in the kinds of classes, meetings, and groups which most persons are called upon to lead or to teach.

The Small-group Discussion

What is it?

Small-group discussion is a teaching technique to divide a large group of persons into small subgroups for greater participation in the discussion. Its primary purpose is to increase interest, participation, and teaching effectiveness. The small-group discussion has been called: *Discussion 66*, the *buzz session*, and the *committee system*.

It is one of the oldest social tools in man's experience. It happens at the end of almost every interesting meeting. Folks just naturally gather in groups of three, four, or five to talk among themselves. When a group gets too large, it soon subdivides. This old natural technique has merely been revived for effective use in classrooms and groups.

Advantages

1. Small-group discussion is a most satisfying tool from the point of view of students or group members.
2. It invites and encourages everyone to participate in a situation in which he feels free and comfortable to take part.
3. The members of the group stimulate each other to think, and this increases the flow of ideas in a setting where ideas can be challenged and freely batted back and forth without embarrassment to anyone.
4. It places responsibility on every individual to think about the problem and to make a contribution for its solution.
5. The students or members of the group work out the answers for themselves. Thus, they are more meaningful than ideas which are simply told by someone else.
6. Small group discussion saves time. It is a rapid technique for pooling ideas or experiences or for bringing out questions and problems of group members. If three or four problems are to be discussed, the group may split into smaller groups so that discussion proceeds on all questions at the same time. As each team or group reports on its question, the entire class or group can make any additions that it feels should be made.
7. Small-group discussion increases group unity. Everyone shares in the discussion and thus becomes more interested in what is going on.
8. It gives each individual member of the class or group experience in tackling problems as a member of a team and of expressing himself in the same kinds of situations that he will encounter as a citizen in a democracy.
9. As the group gains experience and sees how much it is able to accomplish, each member develops confidences in his own ability to handle problems and in the democratic process as an effective way to solve problems and to get things done.

How to organize a group

The content of the discussion and the length of the discussion vary widely according to the purposes of the group, but the method of organizing the group for discussion is much the same. The steps are the following:

1. Orient the group.

Tell the group briefly what you plan to do and how you plan to do it, so everyone will know what is going to happen. Here is a sample introduction indicating the kind of information they will want to know.

Our topic for discussion tonight is, *How to Get Participation in the Group.* To get everyone in the discussion we have decided to use the *small-group-discussion* technique which is both productive and enjoyable. Here is how it goes:

First, divide into groups of four to six persons—not more than six. Persons in the odd-numbered rows turn their chairs around so they face the even-numbered rows. Then count from the aisle, and let every three persons become one of a committee of six. Continue until all are in committees. As soon as you are in your committee of six, introduce yourselves by name and home town. Then select a chairman and a recorder. It is the job of the chairman to see that everyone gets a chance to express his ideas, and the job of the recorder to write the ideas of this particular group and to be prepared to report to the entire group after the discussion.

We have two questions, so one-half will take the first question, the other half the second question. The people on the right side of the room can discuss this question, *Why Do Some Persons Not Participate in Meetings?* The people on the left side of the room can discuss this question, *Why Do Some Persons Participate in Meetings?* Each group has 12 minutes to discuss this topic after which we will call on the recorders to report for their groups. Each group has a card on which to write, and I will write the two questions on the board so everyone can see them. Are there any questions? If you have a question after we start, raise your hand and I will come to you.

Such an introduction lets everyone know what is to happen and what to expect. Sometimes, in a large group of 400 or more, written instructions for the odd- and even-numbered rows help. The leader should always go over such written instructions with the group.

2. Divide the large group into subgroups.

The large group can be divided in several ways, depending on the room and the group:

Have the odd-numbered rows turn around to face the even-numbered rows. This works well in large meetings. If the seats are stationary, the persons on the odd rows may turn around in their seats.

In smaller groups, you can demonstrate with five persons who sit together and have the rest follow your example.

Have the persons count and let the *1's* form a group, the *2's* a group, and so on. This is most effective in some kinds of meetings, because it splits little friendship cliques and helps people to get acquainted and thus encourages a greater exchange of ideas.

3. Keep the subgroup small.

The size of the subgroups de-

pends upon the topic to be discussed. If it is a topic that requires considerable thought, five or six persons provide more thought stimulation than a smaller group and make the members feel at ease because no one feels pressed to come up with an idea. If the topic is one that most persons are likely to have several ideas about, three- or four-person groups give more opportunity to participate and are more satisfactory. Six is about maximum size for best results. With a group of seven or more persons, some individuals are left out of the participation.

4. How much time should be given to discussion?

The length of time for discussion varies with the topic. It should be long enough for each group to put down several ideas but not long enough to exhaust the topic. As the ideas are pooled, the group can be invited to add points which they feel have been omitted.

5. Consolidate the findings and report back to the large group.

There are three or four ways to consolidate the findings and to report back. The size of the group and the purpose determine which procedure to select.

In raising questions for discussion following a talk, you can move from group to group asking each for its best question and allowing enough time for answers after each question. In this technique, it is well to call for questions from different parts of the room. The discussion period is usually not long enough to cover all of the questions, and the group feels better if you do not concentrate on one particular part of the room in calling for questions.

If the group is fairly small, the spokesman from each group may present the report for his group. This works best where the group is working out answers to a question or problem. In such a group, the repetition of answers adds emphasis and usually does not detract.

Sometimes, such as in a problem census, program planning, or where a problem calls for a large number of answers, it works well to have a blackboard and to have a recorder list all the questions or answers on the board. It is usually best to get all the points down before you discuss any of them.

One way to avoid repetition and still give some recognition to all the groups is to take a quick vote of the number of groups who have the same question or answer while the recorder is writing the statement. This also gives some indication of the relative importance of each question.

Where the group is large, more than 100 persons, it is sometimes advantageous to send the recorders of each subgroup into an adjoining room to con-

solidate the answers while the group goes ahead with other matters.

It is well to have someone prepared to lead in the consolidation and to have one of the recorders report the findings back to the group.

Occasionally, it may fit the purposes of the group best to collect the reports from the various groups, have a committee consolidate them, and report the findings at the next meeting. Usually, however, it is best to get a report back during the same meeting.

6. Have a discussion follow the report.

The reports are a consolidation of the suggestions of the small groups and do not represent agreement of the group. Some discussion is usually appropriate. The length of such a discussion depends again upon the topic and the purpose. Following the small-group discussion the members are more free to discuss the questions in the larger group than they would otherwise be.

7. Call the attention of the group to its accomplishments.

Frequently the group becomes lost in the process of participation and is not aware of how much has been accomplished unless it is called to their attention. Questions such as the following serve to make a group aware of their own productiveness, the quality of their own ideas, and the tremendous resource which exists in the experience of the group. "How do you feel about the amount that we have accomplished today? How do you feel about the quality of the ideas that have been presented? Do you think that we have gained more or less information than a speaker could have given us?"

8. When should you use small-group discussion?

The small-group discussion is one of several teaching tools. The effective teacher or group leader is the one who knows them all and uses the ones which best fit his situation. This technique has several uses. A few situations in which it has proved effective are the following:

To draw out people's ideas and to find what they want when planning the program of the organization.

To find what people want to know about a particular topic for a particular meeting. Frequently speakers spend most of their time telling people what they already know and little time on issues in which they are really interested. Give the speaker a list of questions for which the group would like to have answers. This assures the maximum use of the speaker's time.

To draw out questions after a speaker has opened the topic.

To pool ideas on a question or a problem.

To discuss the pro's and con's of

a particular issue, theory, or proposed solution.

To divide a large topic into sub-topics and have different groups work on different sub-topics; then have each group report its conclusions.

9. In what part of the meeting should small-group discussion be used?

The small-group discussion can be the basis of the entire meeting or it may precede or follow a speaker, a film, a socio-drama, or a panel. Wherever discussion is appropriate the small-group discussion which gets total participation may save time and better serve part of the purpose. Usually, it is combined with the large-group discussion which follows the report of the small groups.

10. How to teach the small-group discussion to a class or group which has not used it before.

Select an interesting topic, a problem in which you know the class will be interested and will have ideas about. Give the class or group one or two experiences, using the method under your direction. After two or three times, they can do it themselves with the help of a few instructions. Do not tell them about it—*show them how to do it.* To see it done and to take part in it gives persons much more confidence in trying it when they are to lead a group.

11. Caution!

a. Do not over-use the small-group discussion or any other technique! Variety of method lends interest. You will have to guard against this, as there is a tendency to keep repeating a technique that is working well.

b. While this tool works well in many situations, it will not do everything. Other tools work better on those topics with which the group members have not had enough experience to formulate good answers or good questions.

The Large-group Discussion

What is it?

The large-group discussion is the most common type known to most of us. A large-group discussion is carried on whenever a total of seven or more persons gather for discussion as one unit. Theoretically, the number of persons could vary from seven to a thousand or more. In practice, however, discussion tends to break down into a question and answer session in groups of forty, fifty, or more.

Where it fits

1. To thresh over ideas as a total group following a small group discussion.
2. Groups with fewer than fifty persons in which the members are

well acquainted and are familiar with the discussion method can use it fairly well following a talk, a panel, a film, or a symposium.

3. Groups of from seven to twenty-five persons can use it fairly well in exploring an idea, though it is more productive to combine it with the small-group discussion.

Advantages

1. Gets members more involved in thinking about the questions and issues than the speaker-audience technique, although not so much as the small-group discussion or the dramatic techniques.
2. Keeps the group together; everyone knows what is happening.
3. Gives the total group a chance to check on any particular idea that may be presented.

Disadvantages

1. Less productive of ideas than the small-group method.
2. Moves slowly and is likely to get side tracked.
3. Frequently a few talkers dominate the meeting.
4. The larger the group, the fewer there are who feel free to speak.
5. As the size of the group increases, participation and the feeling of responsibility on the part of the members decreases.

Some suggestions for leading large-group discussions

1. Choose a topic in which the group is interested.

A discussion technique may create some interest, but for the most part it simply facilitates it.

2. If possible, have the group sit in a circle, square, or diamond shape arrangement and face each other.

With such an arrangement all can see each other's faces and can talk to each other.

3. Sit down in the circle like any other member, with persons on either side, if the group is small enough so that they can see you and hear you easily.

This creates informality and helps the group to take more responsibility upon itself.

4. Encourage people to speak loudly enough so they can be heard.

In large groups of row seats or chairs it is sometimes necessary for the leader to repeat the statement.

5. When questions are directed to you, as a group leader, bounce them back to the group for an answer rather than answer them yourself.

If anyone in the group knows the answer, it is usually better to come from them than from you. This prevents leader domination, maintains member participation and interest, and keeps the discussion from disintegrating into a question-and-answer session. Withhold your own comment until others have expressed their ideas.

6. Use a minimum of formality.

The smaller groups need almost none. The best amount is that which makes for greatest productiveness. Too much kills interest and wastes time. Too little in a

large meeting may let it get out of hand and thereby waste time.

7. **Encourage group members to talk to the group and direct their questions to the group.**

8. **Summarize at the end.**

Either a summary by the leader or a group summary stresses important points, helps them to organize the ideas and enables them to see how much they have accomplished. Often, it is well to call attention to this last point as groups are seldom conscious of how productive they have been.

The Opposing Panel

THE opposing panel was developed to meet a particular type of situation which is rather common in classes and groups. There are many important topics that have been talked about, written about, and discussed, and yet there are still many questions and misconceptions about them. If you have further talks, or general discussion, most of the time is spent in hashing over that which is already known. When group members see the topic listed, they say to themselves, "No, not that again!" The opposing panel was developed to meet this kind of a situation and to avoid rehashing that which is already known, to get at the unknown, and to obtain interest and involvement. While it was developed for this particular need, it has been found to be an interesting way of discussing new topics also.

How to do it

1. Divide your group in half, designating the one-half as the "question raisers" and the other half as the "question answerers."
2. Divide each half into small groups of four to six persons, as in the small-group discussion.
3. Announcing the topic, assign the "question raisers" the job of getting down some good questions —the kind they have wondered about or those they have heard others asking about. Next, assign the "question answerers" the job of anticipating the kind of questions which might come up and being ready to answer them.
4. Designate yourself as one of the "question answerers." This will enable you to make your contribution as one of the group.
5. Allow from 15 to 20 minutes for preparation.
6. Call on one of the subgroups of "question raisers" to ask their best question, letting the "question answerers" give the answers. You, as one of this group, can add anything you wish after the others have had a chance.
7. The "question raisers" may not be satisfied with the answers you give and may wish to add something to the answer themselves.

Letting them do so usually adds to their interest and to the completeness of the answer.

8. Call on another subgroup of "question raisers" for their best question and repeat the same procedure as long as your time permits.
9. Take a few minutes at the end for a leader summary or a group summary to call attention to high points, group interest, and group productiveness.

Advantages

1. The opposing panel avoids the *known* overworked material and moves immediately into the *unknowns* and the *unclear items.*
2. It introduces a friendly competitive element between the "question raisers" and the "question answerers."
3. It creates a situation in which everyone has to think about the question.
4. It introduces an element of suspense.
5. Participation in the small groups provides for fellowship and social needs, thus creating general satisfaction.
6. Experience indicates that both groups go through the same process in the preparation period. They think of both the question and the possible answers.
7. The learning which takes place in the small groups as they discuss possible questions and answers is as valuable as any other part.
8. It creates interest and gets total participation.
9. It keeps the attention of the group members on the questions and their answers.

Question-and-Answer Techniques

In many classes or meetings a portion of the time is designated for discussion. What usually happens, however, can better be described as a question-and-answer session. This may take place in four ways:

1. The leader may introduce the questions and call upon the group for answers.
2. The leader may draw questions from the groups and he or some resource person answers them. (A resource person is any member of the group, or person invited into the group, who has special information or experience with the item being considered.)
3. The leader may draw questions from the group. Then turn the question back to the group for an answer. In this case a resource person usually makes his contribution as a member of the group.
4. The leader raises some questions

which he answers himself or calls upon some resource person to answer.

All of these techniques have their particular uses. A few general pointers may serve as guides in choosing which one to use.

1. Questions start persons to think regardless of who asks them.
2. A person likes to ask and answer questions if the situation is made comfortable for him.
3. In trying to get at the questions which are in the minds of the group members, it is usually safer to ask for them than to guess at them.
4. Do not underestimate the resources within the group itself. The combined knowledge and experience of the group members are frequently greater than that of the leader or resource person. In such cases the best service is to enable them to pool and share their knowledge quickly and efficiently.
5. On new material or technical matters with which the group has had no knowledge or experience, a resource person is essential.

How to get the group to raise questions

1. The small-group discussion is probably the most productive tool to get persons to raise questions and to get the greatest involvement.
2. An alternate technique that works well and gives variety is to give the members of the group a one- or two-minute period to jot down the questions they would like to ask. This concentrates attention, thus producing better questions. Likewise, a person gets his own questions clearly in mind and is less likely to forget them as he gets involved in the discussion.
3. Reminding group members to make note of questions when they think of them helps. It's easy to forget the questions that come to your mind when you are trying to follow a speaker or a discussion.

How to pool the knowledge and experience of a group in answering questions in a short time

1. Here again the small-group discussion is usually the most productive.
2. If you have several questions, divide them among the subgroups with provisions for the total group to make additions following the report of each subgroup.
3. If the group is very large and the time very short, you may find it best to send the subgroup recorders to another room to consolidate the findings. You may wish to assign someone to help them consolidate their material.
4. In some instances you may use a blackboard.

Two recorders each taking every other answer quickly pool the ideas on the board.

A small group with two or more questions to answer can choose a recorder for each question. As each question is answered, the recorder for that question can leave the group long enough to list his group's ideas on the board. The group continues with the remaining questions.

The Socio-Drama

The socio-drama is an effective technique to develop interest and participation in a class or a group.

What is socio-drama?

A socio-drama is a dramatic skit. Participants act out a realistic situation just as though they were the persons involved. Like a lecture, movie, or discussion, socio-drama is a tool that may be used either in the classroom or in a group meeting.

Why use socio-drama?

1. The socio-drama provides a way to get insights into some problems of human relations that are difficult to get in any other way.
2. It is a simple and effective technique for teaching the basic principles of human relations—for understanding why individuals, organizations, and nations behave the way they do in various situations.
3. It is a way to handle situations that might otherwise be heavily charged with emotion in which group members might feel guilty or embarrassed to discuss. Marital problems, parental problems, and problems which arise between members of an organization would fall in this classification. While it may be the *same kind* of problem that one or more persons in the room are facing, it is not *his problem* they are discussing. Hence, he gets some new ideas and answers without others ever knowing what his problems are.
4. The socio-drama is a means whereby you can enable people to look at their own behavior objectively. As the skit develops they see characters acting in the skit in some of the same ways they themselves act in real situations. As a member of the audience, or in some other role, they are able to see themselves as the others see them, to feel how they would feel if treated that way, and afterwards they hear how others feel about that type of behavior. Throughout they are protected, because any criticism is being directed at a character in an act and not at them.
5. Socio-drama provides a group with a common experience which they can talk about. Much time is wasted in discussions because the members of the class or group are each talking and

thinking in terms of their own experiences which are frequently very different. Thus, misunderstandings arise. A short skit presenting a problem for discussion helps considerably to overcome this handicap and to cover ground more rapidly.

6. Role-playing, that is becoming some character other than yourself in an act, is one of the most common forms of socio-drama. *It teaches* the very important skill of *putting yourself in the other fellow's shoes* in order to understand how he will react in a particular situation and why he behaves as he does. This skill enables one to predict how others will behave in a situation, and enables one to see and appreciate his point of view. It is one of the most valuable tools a person can acquire in learning to get along with other people.
7. Socio-drama is an effective way to test alternative methods of working in a group or handling a situation and provides a way to improve the methods and technique used in inter-personal relations.
8. Last, but by no means least, socio-drama is fun, especially for those who participate, but also for those who observe it. It is a technique that couples effective learning and a satisfying activity.

Types of socio-drama

Two major types of socio-drama are *actualization* and *role-playing*. *Actualization* is acting out a particular situation, with the actors being themselves in character throughout. This type is effective in trying various group methods and in observing group processes to increase the efficiency of the group. *Role-playing* has three types: role reversal, character role-playing, and position role-playing.

In *role reversal*, group members are given the roles of those persons with whom they usually interact. The young person becomes a parent, or the parent becomes a child; the cop becomes a motorist or the motorist a traffic cop; the employer becomes an employee or the employee becomes an employer; the student becomes a teacher, or the teacher becomes a student. This is a way to get the other person's point of view and to look at your own as it probably appears to him. This technique of seeing the other fellow's side and seeing yourselves as others see you is most effective in problem solution and also in encouraging self improvement. No-one else tells you what is wrong; you see it.

In *character role-playing* the participant becomes a specific character other than himself and in the situation acts as he thinks that particular character would act in that particular situation. Thus, a person in a community situation may become John Madison, age 64, a retired farmer with a small saving, whose children are married and on their own;—or she may be Mrs.

LeRoy Ellis, an ex-school teacher, age 32, who met and married one of the local boys who is now a clerk in a grocery store; she has two children of preschool age.

Position role-playing is like character role-playing except that the facts about the person are not given and are left for the one playing the role to fill in as he interprets them. He is simply told that he is a teacher, a father, a student or a salesman.

The type of socio-drama to select depends upon the purpose.

How to do a socio-drama

1. Select a specific problem situation.
2. Describe the characters who would be involved.
3. Select characters either by volunteer or by assignment.
4. Give the characters large name cards. This helps to keep them in role or in position and enables others to call them by name without hesitation.
5. Give participants a little time for preparation—from 10 to 12 minutes if in a group. If they are in a class a written assignment to study two or three different characters and describe how you think each will react is a good idea. A few suggestions on what to prepare for speeds up the process. Suggestions such as "What stand are you going to take on this issue? What are your real reasons? What kind of reasons are you going to give to other people when they ask you?"
6. Bring the audience into the picture by having them select a character or two to follow to see whether they agree on the way the roles are interpreted by the participants.
7. Have someone give the setting and let the action go off with characters in their various roles or positions.
8. Continue the action until the various persons have had a chance to respond two or three times and to make their position clear. Then stop it while interest and participation are still high. Sometimes this takes only 5 or 10 minutes, at other times it may take 15 or 20 minutes, and sometimes even longer.
9. How you follow up depends on your purpose. Here are some questions that are frequently used:

Ask the participants in the skit and the audience whether they thought everyone was in role or in what different ways the roles might have been played.

Ask why certain characters behave as they did in a specific situation. This can be asked of the characters and of the audience also.

Ask characters how they felt when a certain thing happened to them or ask the audience how they think they would have felt in that spot.

Ask characters to explain why

there was so much difference between their real reasons and what they had actually said in the situation.

Ask what principles of human relations we might derive from the behavior we have observed in the skit.

Ask which of the alternative methods that were demonstrated would work best and why.

After presenting a problem you can ask, "Why did the undesirable things happen?" and "What could have been done to have avoided this difficulty?" Sometimes the group is asked to demonstrate the proposed solution.

These are merely suggestive types of questions. Your own questions and discussion following a socio-drama should follow naturally out of your particular purpose.

An alternative method that has proved productive and interesting, particularly in raising problems to stimulate discussion, is to use a written script in which the conversation is written and the characters simply read their parts as though reading a play. This technique takes less preparation in the meeting and gives some persons more security in participating. This technique is good to raise problems; but for some purposes, the free interpretation of a character will be more productive.

Suggested subjects

The subjects for socio-drama are as wide as the area of human relations and human problems. The problems should be selected to fit the needs of the particular group or class. Their interest will be in terms of things they want to know. Problem situations are found where people live—in the home, between parents, between parents and children; in the school, between students and teachers, and between teachers and school administrators; on the job between employees and employers; in the neighborhood between neighbors; in the shopping centers between customers and clerks; in the community between organizations and special interest groups; and in the international picture between various countries through their representatives. Role playing can apply to a parent trying to get a child up in the morning and to a committee of delegates from various countries arguing over the Berlin Blockade with equal facility.

How to teach socio-drama to a class or a group

Select one or two simple role-playing situations that you have used and found successful, and have the class or group put them on under your direction. After one or two experiences under direction and a few written instructions to guide them, they can go ahead on their own. They pick up skill with

practice. Don't tell them about it. Show them how to do it!

Caution!

Role playing is one technique of teaching. It is very effective for some things, but it won't do everything. It has its uses and its limitations. Well used, it will add greatly to the interest, insight, understanding, and skills of your members and can be used to increase your effectiveness as a group.

The Lecture

THE lecture, the most widely used technique for teaching in American schools, needs little introduction. Its characteristic is that one person, the leader or teacher, does the talking and the class or the group becomes an audience.

It has several advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages

1. The lecture enables a person to present his ideas to a large number of people.
2. It makes possible a systematic presentation of ideas.
3. It enables a person to put out a great deal of information.
4. It enables a large number of persons to take advantage of the unique knowledge or experience of one individual at the same time.
5. It is fairly effective in dispensing information.

Disadvantages

1. The members of the group retain only a small portion of the information given out.
2. Few lecturers can hold interest and attention and teach effectively at the same time.
3. The group member does not necessarily become involved and the situation does not require him to think.
4. In keeping up with the flow of ideas, the group member quickly forgets what has gone before. It is not uncommon for a person coming out of a lecture not to be able to recall the main points though he is likely to have an impression as to whether it was good or poor.
5. While the lecture is useful in presenting facts and information, it has less value in developing skills, attitudes, and the kind of an understanding which is necessary to put the knowledge and facts to work in a concrete situation.

The lecture has several uses by itself and in combination with other techniques. Frequently, it is used in situations where other techniques would be more productive. The caution here is to get acquainted with other techniques and then to use the lecture where it fits best.

The Symposium

The symposium consists of two or more brief talks presenting different phases of the same general topic. It is usually followed by a discussion or question period.

Advantages over lecture

1. The symposium introduces a wider variety of experience and knowledge of the subject.
2. Creates some suspense as the audience wonders what the next person is going to say. This is particularly true if the subject is controversial.
3. The change of voices and breaking up the time span helps to hold attention and interest.
4. In general, a symposium gets greater involvement on the part of the audience than a lecture.

Disadvantages

1. Usually the symposium is a less systematic presentation.
2. It may not cover so much ground as other methods do.

The discussion period which usually follows may employ either the small- or large-group discussion.

Different types

1. Usually the symposium speakers are selected because of their knowledge of the subject.
2. One variation from this which works well in some situations is to divide the group into subgroups as in the small-group discussion, assign the subgroups different phases of the general topic and, after 10 or 15 minutes of discussion in the subgroups, organize a symposium composed of the chairmen of the subgroups. After their presentation, the meeting is opened for questions and discussion from the floor.
3. Another variation is to have each symposium member give a brief talk. Then have the symposium members become a panel to discuss some of the live issues among themselves before drawing the audience in to ask questions.
4. There are two main types of presentation, depending on the nature of the topic:

   The symposium members may briefly present answers or opinions on the topic or question.

   The members may spend their time raising questions and problems which provoke interest, leaving the answers to the discussion period which follows.

The Forum

Like the symposium, the forum is a speaker-audience technique in which there are two or more speakers who present talks on the same subject. The primary characteristic of the forum, however, is that the subject is controversial and the speakers present the opposing sides of the question.

Each speaker presents his case to

the audience for its consideration. They do not spend their time trying to tear each other's cases down as in a debate. The forum is usually followed by a question-and-answer period in which the members of the audience direct their questions to the particular speaker concerned.

Advantages

1. The forum is an excellent way to present the various sides of a controversial issue.
2. It can fill an important role in democratic public life in presenting the various sides of a question in the same meeting and leaving the listeners to make up their minds. Lecturers, or newspapers, and magazines are prone to present and argue only that side of the case which they individually support.
3. The forum, because the topic is controversial, is usually interesting to the audience.
4. Like the symposium, the change of speakers and voice tend to break up the period and to make it appear short.

Disadvantages

1. The speakers may not spend their time on the issues which are of most concern to the audience.
2. As in the lecture, success is largely dependent upon the ability of the speakers.
3. Since the forum is basically a lecture by two or more persons, it suffers from most of the same weaknesses as the lecture.

The Panel

THE PANEL, sometimes called the *round table discussion,* is usually composed of four to six persons. The members of the panel carry on a discussion of the topic among themselves and the audience "listens in" on the discussion.

Sometimes the procedure is formal, with the speakers getting permission from the leader or moderator, when they wish to talk; at other times it is very informal, the panel leader simply states the question and the members pick it up from there.

The panel question

Needless to say, the more interesting the topic the better.

The panel members

The membership of the panel may differ somewhat depending on the question. Of the three or four possible choices, any may be successful.

1. You may have a panel of experts.
2. You may have a panel of persons who are known to represent different positions or points of view in relation to the question. They may be experts on the topic, but they do not need to be.
3. You may have a panel representing different ages or different occupations without knowing what their point of view might be.
4. The panel may be composed of

members of your own group drawn more or less at random.

How to use the panel

1. Seat the panel members in a V shape with the leader or moderator at the point of the V. In this position they can see each other and the audience can see them.
2. If the panel members do not know each other well, *a folded card* with the person's name on both sides placed on the table in front of him or her will enable both those across and those near by to refer to the person by name. Print the name large enough so it will be easy to see.
3. The leader has *five or six jobs* which he must be prepared to do. Introduce the panel members. Introduce the topic.
   Be prepared to raise some provocative questions which would lead the panel to explore the various aspects of the topic.
   Keep the panel on the subject and help it to move to a new question when the main points have been brought out on the one being discussed.
   Be prepared to lead the audience in a discussion or a question and answer period following the panel presentation.
   Be prepared to summarize or lead the panel in a summary at the end.

Advantages

1. There is always an element of suspense as to what is going to happen next.
2. Questions and answers are likely to be raised in the way that the audience thinks of them.
3. Fast moving questions and answers create interest and participant involvement.
4. A panel under a skillful leader can cover a large amount of ground.
5. Of the speaker-audience techniques, the panel is perhaps the most dependable in creating interest and general audience satisfaction. Careful planning will help assure its success.

Disadvantages

1. The panel does not lend itself to a systematic presentation of a topic.
2. Many questions are left only partially answered.
3. Usually the participants do not know in advance what questions will be raised, therefore the panel is better suited to the presentation of opinions than of facts.

Summary Techniques

You will never know what you got from the meeting unless you stop to take a look, and in looking you may add several things which you had previously missed. Some of the best techniques of teaching happen so naturally and gradually that the learner is not

aware of what he has learned. A good summary helps to clinch the point and drive it home.

A good summary is not a rehash of all the details; rather it consists of a brief statement of the main points or ideas.

How to summarize

1. The leader may summarize at the end.
2. A content recorder who has been taking notes during the session may be called upon to report the main points.
3. An observing recorder may be used. The observing recorder records and reports the main points of content and in addition observes the methods which the group is using, calling attention to points which might strengthen its effectiveness.
4. The leader may have the group develop its own summary by asking the question: "What have we gotten today which should be mentioned?" This may effectively be done in two ways:

By large-group discussion—letting them add points one at a time from the floor.

By small-group techniques—divide into subgroups for 3 to 5 minutes, and let the recorders report for their groups.

The group summary is the most comprehensive of those listed. The total group will remember more points than the leader or an appointed recorder. It has one or two other advantages also. It leads them to think about the things which they received which further clinches them in their thinking. Also, they are telling themselves what they got out of the meeting. They are more likely to agree with themselves than with someone who tells them.

Some Useful Methods

In the preceding pages you have been told about the tools which a teacher or leader may use to increase both the interest and participation of group members and the effectiveness of his teaching. To present them separately in this manner and stop there, however, is misleading, for they are usually used in combinations, not separately. These combinations of tools that a teacher or leader works out to achieve his objective in a particular meeting is called a *method*.

Another important consideration in the success of a method is the time devoted to each part.

It is obvious that with several methods and differing times endless combinations are possible. The best combination is the one which is "tailor made" to fit your particular objective or situation. With experience in using all of the tools, leaders soon become proficient in developing their own combinations.

The following methods have been

used successfully and serve as suggested examples:

Information with which the audience has had no previous experience

1. Introduction, 5 minutes; lecture, 25 minutes; small-group discussion to raise questions, 10 minutes; question-and-answer period, 25 minutes; summary, 5 minutes.

   The effectiveness of this method is sometimes increased by spending 5 minutes of the previous meeting to find what questions people have on the topic. These questions are then sent to the lecturer and enable him to make more effective use of his lecture time.

2. Introduction, 5 minutes; 4 symposium members, each from 5 to 10 minutes depending on total length of meeting. Symposium members become a panel to discuss the topic for 10 to 15 minutes; a 2-minute pause for each person to make a mental note of the questions he wants to ask; from 20 to 30 minutes for questions and answers; summary, 5 minutes.

3. Introduction and orientation on what things to look for in the film, from 8 to 10 minutes; the film, from 15 to 30 minutes; small-group discussion to pool ideas which you got from the film and to jot down questions which it raised, from 10 to 15 minutes; large-group discussion, first pooling ideas for total group then discussing the questions from 20 to 30 minutes; summary, 5 minutes.

4. Introduction and orientation, 5 minutes; two forum speakers, each 15 minutes; a pause for audience members to jot down their questions, 2 minutes; question-and-answer period, from 20 to 30 minutes; summary, 5 minutes.

Topics with which the audience has had some experience

1. A comparison of three methods of leading a group. Orientation, 5 minutes; selection of the three groups to demonstrate the three methods, 5 minutes; the three casts make their plans and the audience get instructions on observation techniques, 10 minutes; the three groups role-play a committee in action, from 5 to 8 minutes each; large-group discussion, 20 minutes; summary, 5 minutes.

2. Getting insight into why people behave the way they do in various situations using sociodrama. Introduction, 5 minutes; role playing of situation, from 15 to 20 minutes (the cast has made preparation in advance); the cast becomes a panel to discuss why they behaved as they did, from 10 to 15 minutes; large-group dis-

cussion or question-and-answer period, from 15 to 20 minutes; summary, 10 minutes.

3. Using the opposing panel for an important topic that has been talked on and discussed many times before, but on which there are still many misconceptions and misinformation.

   Orientation and dividing the group, 10 minutes; small-group discussion with one side thinking of good questions to ask and the other trying to anticipate what might be asked and considering possible answers, from 15 to 20 minutes; question-and-answer period, from 25 to 30 minutes; summary, 5 minutes.

4. Determining the wants of the group in planning a program. Introduction, 5 minutes; small-group discussion, from 15 to 20 minutes; consolidating ideas on a board, 10 minutes; discussion of importance and priorities, from 20 to 30 minutes; summary, 5 minutes.

5. Discussion and pooling ideas on a problem with which members of the group have had varied experience. Introduction, 5 minutes; small-group discussion, from 15 to 25 minutes; consolidation on a board, 10 minutes; large-group discussion of questions which arise, from 20 to 30 minutes; summary, 5 minutes.

The foregoing examples of methods merely suggest some of the possible combinations. Timing of the particular parts depends on the length of the meeting.

Knowing specifically which skills, attitudes, and understandings you want to develop helps greatly in choosing the combination of tools that will best achieve your objective.

Suggestions for Group Observers

What is group observation?

Group observation is the process of watching *how* the group functions; in other words, *the ways* it tries to achieve its objectives. The methods used are observed in terms of their contribution to the effectiveness of the group.

The job of the group observer

The observer's job is to observe, record, and report back to the group those elements of the group's behavior that are essential to its effectiveness. The observer may spend all of his time at this task or he may participate in the group, giving most of his attention to observing.

Why have a group observer?

The efficiency, productiveness, and "satisfyingness" of groups, as you know from experience, ranges

from very high to very low. In most instances, those that are average or low do not know why. Their methods are those which have been handed down by tradition in their group. Concentration on the subjects being discussed and "custom blindness" frequently keeps them from seeing themselves and perpetuates their inefficiencies.

The group observer contributes to group effectiveness in two ways: (1) He leads the group in looking at itself, which increases the effectiveness of the meeting. (2) By calling attention to group processes, he creates an awareness to the things that contribute to group effectiveness. The individual who is sensitive to these is likely to be more effective in any group in which he may participate.

What to observe

Many aspects of a group may be observed. A few of the more common items which the average group will find easy to use and which they will be able to modify as the need becomes apparent are the following: (1) physical arrangement and comfort, (2) orientation, (3) group atmosphere, (4) communication, (5) interest and motivation, (6) participation, (7) teamwork, (8) productiveness, (9) choice of methods, and (10) opinions of the members.

A handy observer's rating sheet which provides a scale for rating and an explanation of the things to observe under each of the main headings has been developed for the first nine items (page 26). An additional tool for observing and recording participation is also included (page 26).

To obtain the opinions of the members, have them fill out a brief "end of the meeting" rating sheet (page 31).

Reporting Back to the Group

The purpose of the report is to get the group to think about itself and thereby to increase its effectiveness. What is reported and how it is reported are selected with this purpose in mind.

When to report

Usually, provision is made for the observer to report to the group. In conferences with several meetings, the report is frequently made at the end of each meeting. Where it is a single meeting lasting from 1½ to 2 hours, reports are often called for at some convenient midpoint and at the end. The chairman sometimes calls for an observer's report to bring the group back on the track when it has been straying.

What to report

Any favorable observations may be reported. Attention may be called to one or two weak points at first. The number may be increased after the group has been working together for a while. Points should be selected which the group can do something about. The observer needs to be sensitive to what the group is ready to take. It is

better to err on the side of too little criticism than too much.

How to report (A few suggestions)

Complimentary statements may be made direct and straightforward. Points that need attention can often be introduced by a question which simply calls attention to the items, but the observer does not draw any conclusions. The group members usually know what took place if they are led to think about it. Questions such as: "How did you feel about the amount we accomplished?" or "How did you feel about participation?" is sometimes enough. Another way to phrase the question is: "I am wondering whether you feel we should be moving faster?" It is usually easiest to start with participation, problems of communication, and problems of orientation. It is a good rule in most group situations to avoid reference to persons. Avoid calling attention to personality clashes except in special cases. Remember always that your purpose is to build and unite the group, not divide it.

Group participation

Knowing that they have an observer, the group is more conscious than usual of group process. The group may be asked to add any additional contribution it would like to make to the observer's report. He may choose to lead a brief discussion on the points to be observed; thus, the group does its own observing.

It is a good idea for all members to know something about the observer's job and something about how reporting should be done.

Caution

Be careful that you do not stress the process so much that it overshadows the subject.

SUNMMARY RATING SHEET FOR GROUP OBSERVERS

Group.................................... Observer....................................

This rating sheet includes some of the items that are important in the productiveness of groups and conferences. A thoughtful look into each of these items may suggest ways in which the effectiveness of the group can be increased. What is your over-all rating of today's meeting for each of the items? *Circle* the appropriate number.

	Very low	Low	Average	High	Very high
1. Physical arrangement and comfort	1	2	3	4	5
2. Orientation	1	2	3	4	5
3. Group atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5
4. Communication	1	2	3	4	5
5. Interest and motivation	1	2	3	4	5
6. Participation	1	2	3	4	5
7. Team work	1	2	3	4	5
8. Productiveness	1	2	3	4	5
9. Choice of methods	1	2	3	4	5

Comments ....

....

....

WHAT TO OBSERVE

1. Physical arrangement and comfort

a. Is the seating arrangement suited to the size of the group, the purpose, and the methods used?

b. Are the ventilation, the heating, and the light arranged for comfort?

c. Are the chairs comfortable?

d. Can members see and hear each other clearly? Have distracting noises been avoided or eliminated?

e. Are the activities and rest periods well timed for comfort?

2. Orientation

a. Do the group members have a clear idea of what the goals and objectives are?

b. Do the group members have a clear idea of how the group is to go

about achieving these objectives? Do they know what they are expected to do and what they can expect from the leader?

c. Is some provision made for the group to see how it is progressing during the meeting?

3. Group atmosphere

a. Does everyone feel free to express his ideas; to agree and to disagree?
b. Is the situation made comfortable for the shy persons to speak up?
c. Is the group member given a feeling of warm friendly acceptance or is the atmosphere cool, indifferent, or hostile?
d. Is the group open-minded? Do they seem interested in drawing in new points of view?
e. Do members respect individuals who express points of view different than their own?
f. Is it democratic? Do the members feel that it is their group and that they can direct it as they wish?
g. Does the procedure tend to be formal or informal?

4. Communication

a. Do the members of the group speak clearly and loudly enough so everyone can hear?
b. Do the members of the group and the resource people express their ideas in words that everyone can understand?
c. Are all members trying to communicate ideas or are there some who make the issue foggy by trying to impress others with their knowledge?
d. Are the examples chosen to illustrate a point the kind with which most group members have had some experience?

5. Interest and motivation

a. How interested are the group members?
b. Do they seem to feel that the objectives are important?
c. Did they help select the objectives?
d. Does the discussion carry into the breaks and continue after the meeting?
e. Is there evidence of extra preparation or extra voluntary study?
f. Does the interest remain high or is it low much of the time?

6. Participation

a. Are all of the members involved in what is going on?
b. Have all members made some contribution?
c. Do the leader and the more active members make it easy for the less vocal members to express their opinions?
d. Is discussion usually directed to the group as a whole?

e. How is the quality of the participation? Are they really digging into the topic?
f. Does the leader toss the questions which come to him back to the group?

7. Team work

a. Is the group working as a team?
b. Do members try to preserve group unity and try to move toward the objective or are there a number of individuals who insist on putting on their own show at the expense of the group?
c. Do the members take responsibility to keep the group moving toward its objective?
d. Does the leader take responsibility to guide and lead when it is needed?
e. Are the leaders and members willing to give the major credit to the combined team?
f. Are the leader and the group members sensitive to the feelings of other members?

8. Productiveness

a. How far has the group moved toward its objectives?
b. Was a summary made so the group can see its accomplishments?
c. How does the group feel about the amount and the quality of its accomplishment?
d. How much time was wasted on unimportant or unrelated topics?
e. How do the group's accomplishments compare with what one or two individuals could have done?
f. To what extent has the contribution added to the knowledge, skills, or attitudes of its members?
g. Did the group members get something which they feel will be useful to them?

9. Choice of methods

a. Were the methods used the best that might have been chosen?
b. Would other methods have saved time, made for greater interest, made for more participation, or have produced more?
c. Were methods changed to fit the particular purpose and situation or was the same method used for everything?
d. Does the group know how to tackle a problem systematically?
e. Has the group had experience with enough different methods to make selective choices feasible?
f. How well did the leader adapt the methods to the experience of the group?

PARTICIPATION CHARTS

Charting the participation of a group reveals many things which a person may not be quite conscious of until he sees it on the chart. A few of the points that will be apparent are:

1. Is the discussion all directed to the leader, or is there discussion among the members?
2. Are the persons speaking holding private conversations with the group listening in, or are the remarks directed to the entire group?
3. Is the physical arrangement leaving special areas in the room where there is no participation?
4. How many have not taken any part at all?
5. Are a few persons doing all the talking?
6. What kind of a seating arrangement best facilitates the kind of discussion you are seeking?

Anyone who pays attention to these items over a period of time will be amazed at how important they frequently are in the success of a group and the satisfactions derived by the members.

Drawing the chart

The easiest way to draw a participation chart of a *small-group meeting* is to draw an outline of the room on a piece of paper and place a small circle to represent the place where each person is located in the room. Each person may be designated by a number, a letter, or an initial. The person who is acting as chairman or leader should be designated.

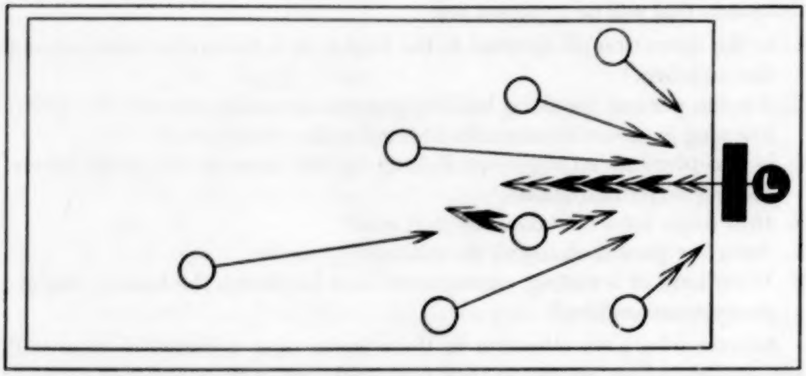
In a *large-group meeting* it would take too much time to designate every person in the room. The story can be more simply and easily told by drawing the outer boundaries of the group, designating the leader, and designating each participant as he or she takes part by placing a circle on the chart approximately where he or she is sitting.

How to record the participation

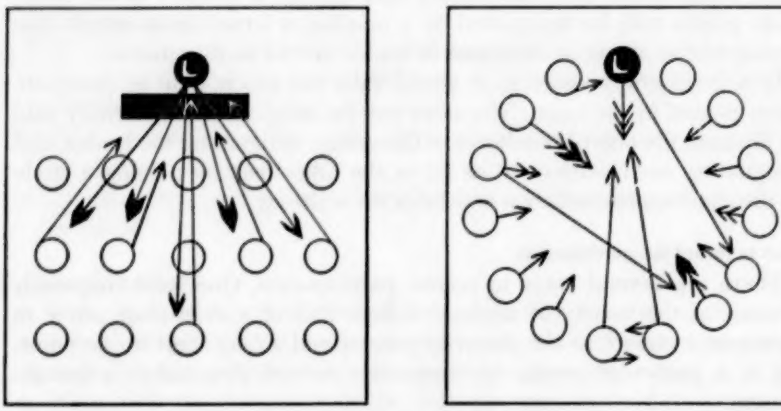
There are several ways to record participation. One used frequently because of the variety of stories it tells is that of a *short-shaft arrow to represent a remark to the group in general* and a *long-shaft arrow* pointing to a particular person *to represent a remark directed to a specific person.*

Frequency of participation can be represented by adding a barb on the arrow each time the person takes part.

The *length of a speech* can be represented by the width of the barb which is placed on the arrow. The following examples represent a 20-minute discussion following a brief lecture in a large group, and in two small groups using different seating arrangements.



Participation chart for large-group discussion



Participation charts for small-group discussion, showing two types of seating arrangement

It should always be remembered that there is no one best seating arrangement or participation pattern. What is best depends upon the purpose, the topic, and the experience of the audience with the topic.

END OF MEETING

Discussion Sheet

What did you think of today's meeting? Please be frank. Your comments can contribute much to the success of future meetings.

How satisfying has today's meeting been for you? (Check)

.... Very satisfying

.... Quite satisfying

.... Rather unsatisfying

.... Very unsatisfying

What were the weaknesses of today's meeting?

What were its strong points?

What could have been done to improve it?

About how many times did you participate in the meeting today? ....Times.

A publication of the
New York State College of Agriculture,
a unit of the State University of New York,
at Cornell University

Reprinted August 1955

Published by the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. M. C. Bond, Director of Extension. This bulletin is published and distributed in furtherance of the purposes provided for in the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914.